The Changing Distance between Jude and Sue: Cousinship and Hardy in Jude the Obscure

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The Changing Distance between Jude and Sue: Cousinship and Hardy in *Jude the Obscure*

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I

It is widely acknowledged that the questioning of what brings human misfortune is a lifelong theme for Thomas Hardy (1840–1928). Against the controversial theory of Darwinism which positively presented the evolutionary process, and the idea that surviving organisms were the best, Hardy, who hesitated to accept this perspective despite his earlier approval of the theory, continuously turned his eyes towards the weak, who are not in harmony with surrounding circumstances.[1] This is clearly represented through his protagonists who can not settle themselves in society. His fundamental concern, therefore, naturally directs itself towards man-made fetters such as social systems and conventions, the avoidable causes of suffering. Inequalities under which women are forced to suffer because of their sex also arise from these. Hence the pursuit of his theme coincides with his aspiration to emancipate women from sexual discriminations. *Jude the Obscure* (1895), his last novel, can be read as the concluding work relating to his aim. For, as it is well known, Hardy renounced the writing of fiction and turned to poetry after *Jude*.[2]

Hardy's conversion from prose to poetry has been interpreted in various ways that contrast with his own assertion that it was because of the abuse accorded both to *Tess* and *Jude*. J. Hillis Miller describes how 'the series of novels. . . brings the narrator and the protagonists closer and closer together,' concluding that there is no longer a disjunction between these two with which to construct the fiction (ix-x). H. M. Daleski, on the other hand, believes that Hardy reached 'a dead end, a blank wall' after dealing with the problem of relations between the sexes. *Jude* leaves no positive possibilities to explore (203-205).[3] There has, however, been no argument that links this issue to the

cousin-relationship between Jude and Sue, one which I propose to consider in this essay.

In *Jude*, the protagonists Jude and Sue are cousins. Yet, hardly anything has been discussed regarding their cousin-relationship. As Hardy reveals in his letter dated 10 November 1895 to Edmund Gosse, what he intends to write is 'the contrast between the ideal life a man wished to lead, and the squalid real life *he was fated to lead*' (my italics).[4] Such a fate also possesses significance for *Jude*. When we consider the fact that Hardy has a strong interest in the idea of heredity, the lack of critical discussion concerning their cousinhood becomes yet more surprising. The condition of cousinship seems to fulfil an obvious function in the novel: it strengthens the tone of fatal tragedy by bringing about a more miserable marriage between Jude and Sue, a marriage between relatives who are of the same blood, to add to each of their individual unhappy fates. The idea of heredity is a useful device for leading the protagonist into a destined life. Yet, it is important to consider that the relationship between Jude and Sue is based on some peculiarities: they are cousins and, at the same time, they resemble each other so closely that '[t]hey seem to be one person split in two!'[5] They are a singular pair. At the end of the novel, however, their "married life" collapses completely despite their extraordinarily strong ties. Jude dies alone while Sue experiences self-renunciation. Hence we naturally come to wonder why Jude and Sue, who seem to embody an entire oneness even physically, have to face so much misery. This seems to be Hardy's dilemma, his deadlocked circumstance, one which compelled him to abandon the writing of fiction.

In this essay, therefore, I will examine how the characteristics of cousinship function in *Jude the Obscure*. The first section will consider the positive effect that the cousinship produces. Being situated at an unstable standpoint between a relative and a lover, Jude and Sue introduce a pendulum-movement into the plot. They create a space of suspense, a space situated between two extremes. Yet, once they begin to share a life together, the distance between them changes. One could connect this with the argument that the focus of the novel shifts beyond the author's expectations. Therefore, in the second section, the negative effect of the introduction of cousinship will be examined. This is also in accord with the process in which the plot loses its possibilities for further development. Then, the last section will consider what Hardy has to face despite the ambitious aspirations that he allows his main characters, and Sue in particular. As a result

of the varying distances that the cousinship produces, another distance—the perpetual difference between man and woman—is revealed as Hardy's dilemma. The introduction of the cousin-relationship between Jude and Sue, in this way, constitutes the foundation of the novel, effectively and ineffectively, altering the distance between the protagonists. *Jude* can not be properly appreciated without an intensive consideration of their cousinship.

II

Cousinship, which is neither as close as immediate family nor as distant as being unrelated, creates an ambiguous link situated between closeness and detachment. Furthermore, it is a marriageable relationship. This is the basis for *Jude*, in which the protagonists Jude and Sue are cousins of different sexes. The ambiguous distance of cousinship throws Jude and Sue into different sorts of intimacy and separation and produces a space where tragedy and comedy overlap. In the abnormal closeness and detachment that appear by turns, Jude is urged to sway right and left continuously as if he were the swing of a pendulum. Both Sue and Jude move between extremes. Beyond the fatal family tragedy of blood, the condition rather functions to create the in–between space of the novel.

As a cousin, Jude has a rightful excuse to call on Sue. Yet as her relative, he is also deprived of a chance to confirm what he is to her or whether they are in love. Making an ironical contrast with Arabella, with whom Jude once ascertained his relationship by asking her directly '[a]re we lovers?' (71), Jude and Sue's cousinship prevents them from simply being lovers. In spite of his desire to hold the definite relationship of lover, Jude suffers greatly for her, who hides her own feelings under the kinship. As a result, when Sue sways, Jude is also urged to sway. They are confined in instability. This, for example, can be seen in the movements of their hands. As if they were wishing to look closely into each other's heart, or even trying to obtain something definite in their ambiguity, they often hold the other's hand. It even seems that they are like blind people, groping their way in complete darkness:

> Jude impulsively placed his hand upon hers; she looked up and smiled, and took his quite freely into her own little soft one, dividing his fingers and coolly examining them, as if they were the fingers of a glove she was purchasing.

> 'Your hands are rather rough, Jude, aren't they?' she said.
> 'Yes. So would yours be if they held a mallet and chisel all day.'
> 'I don't dislike it, you know. I think it is noble to see a man's hands subdued to what he works in.' (153)

Soon after this, however, Sue, who carefully conceals her true feelings, reveals that she is to marry Phillotson in two years' time. On hearing this, Jude immediately 'drew his hand quite away from hers,' saying, 'O, Sue! . . . But of course it is right — you couldn't have done better!' (153-154). This situation once more forms a contrast to Jude's relationship with Arabella. Their staying together and holding hands in this way does not lead directly to the conclusion that Jude and Sue are in love. They might be in love, yet, they still can not do anything about it—because they are cousins. In *Jude*, however, this jocular going back and forth shown by the movements of their hands is suggestive; for it indicates the amplitude within which the protagonists are obliged to sway. Namely, the dramatic possibilities for things to develop either towards tragedy or comedy are symbolically represented in these unstable spaces that Jude and Sue's cousinhood produces.

Within the space in suspension that the cousinhood creates, the relationship of Jude and Sue further displays various aspects. Contrary to the general acceptance of *Jude* as a plain tragedy, their relationship gives the plot other possibilities. When the time for Sue's marriage with Phillotson approaches, it first confines Jude in his emotional confusion when she asks Jude in a letter to give her away on the grounds that he is 'the only married relation' (189). Despite his reply that 'I am, as you say, the person nearest related to you in this part of the world' (189), Jude feels entirely bewildered. Being afflicted by the opposing standpoints of relative and lover, he has no clue to recognizing her intention at all. Here the narrator describes Jude's inner feeling:

> What had jarred on him . . . was . . . the phrase 'married relation'—What an idiot it made him seem as her lover! If Sue had written that in satire, he could hardly forgive her; if in suffering—ah, that was another thing! (189)

Jude's vexation brought on by Sue's incomprehensible behaviour reveals a tragic tone. Here it seems that the swing of the pendulum considerably leans towards tragedy. The narrator who assimilates his

standpoint with Jude further strengthens this impression: the two men are suffering here from the condition of cousinship.[6]

However, to provide the space in–between, relative and lover, tragedy and comedy, the condition of cousinship once again makes the pendulum recover its swing. With the arrival of Sue's wedding day, *Jude* comes to bear an alternative aspect, bringing into question the general acknowledgement of the work as a tragedy. This produces the most striking matrimonial farce in the novel. During Jude and Sue's last private morning walk, they happen to come to the church where she is going to marry Phillotson within two hours. Here Sue, who had never taken Jude's arm before, now takes it and induces him to go in:

> They strolled undemonstratively up the nave towards the altar railing, which they stood against in silence, turning then and walking down the nave again, her hand still on his arm, precisely like a couple just married. The too suggestive incident, entirely of her making, nearly broke down Jude.
>
> 'I like to do things like this,' she said in the delicate voice of an epicure in emotions, which left no doubt that she spoke the truth.
>
> (191)

This behaviour, as if they were celebrating their own wedding, has a dismal aspect. Yet beyond Jude's—and perhaps Sue's—anguish, it makes the reader feel rather frustrated.[7] What is more, this is another representation of their mingled relationship of relative and lover. For, due to the fact that the actual wedding scene is not clearly described in the novel, their going half way to the altar acts as a substitute for Jude taking on the role of giving her away and instead being her married relation. They go the first half way as relatives and then come back the latter half as lovers. Because they are cousins of different sexes, Jude and Sue are in this way forced to sway between their unsettled standpoints, producing the overlapping space of tragicomedy in the novel.

After Sue's marriage, Jude is given another opportunity to hold Sue's hands. This moment shows a significant advance in their relationship: for they embody a "middle," the distinctive space in-between. Here, they hold the other's hands not alternately, but mutually. The following quotation is from the scene in which Jude visits Sue in Shaston where she lives as Phillotson's wife. Waiting for her, Jude plays the piano in the schoolroom. Then, 'the person came close and laid her fingers lightly upon his bass hand. The imposed hand was a little one he seemed to know, and he turned' (219). Notic-

ing Sue's approach from her familiar hands, Jude asks her to play the piano for him:

> Sue sat down, and her rendering of the piece, though not remarkable, seemed divine as compared to his own. She, like him, was evidently touched—to her own surprise—by the recalled air; and when she had finished, and he moved his hand towards hers, *it met his own half-way*. Jude grasped it — just as he had done before her marriage. (219 my italics)

Their hands are thus clasped again. Yet it is significant that they meet at a mid-point of the distance between them. What this scene indicates is that Jude and Sue figuratively take the middle ground after having swayed from right to left in their varying distances. This is when the pendulum seems to stop its swaying. Moreover, as becomes clear later, this is the very scene that Phillotson observes, hiding himself in the school. He discloses it to Gillingham, his friend, with great surprise: 'the extraordinary sympathy, or similarity, between the pair. He is her cousin, which perhaps accounts for some of it. *They seem to be one person split in two!*'(245 my italics). Hence the fact of Jude and Sue's being cousins helps to form a physical oneness beyond their biological differences. Because of this peculiarity, it is often argued that there is a reversal of roles for Jude as a man and Sue as a woman.[8] Yet this seems insufficient: for this can be rather understood as a symbolic representation of the overlapping space of tragedy and comedy, the characteristic of Hardy's artifice in writing inevitable "splits" in life which humans are destined to experience.

After making Jude sway right and left in his relationship with Sue, the condition of cousinship creates their peculiar oneness that leaves a most lasting impression in the novel to readers. All the potentialities of the protagonists' going towards tragedy or comedy are condensed into their entire oneness, withholding a great energy to re-swing the pendulum at this stage. This embodiment of the Hardy outlook makes us wonder in which way the plot is going to develop with further sways of the pendulum.

III

The introduction of Jude and Sue's cousinhood originally seems intended to intensify the fatal aspect which the protagonists are led to face. Yet, we hardly receive the impression that their tragedy is rooted in the destined, family obsession. Rather, it is the condition of cousin-

ship that torments Jude, causing him to oscillate between the position of the relative and the lover, between the tragic and comic standpoint. Moreover, there exists a shift of focus in the novel as *Jude* was mainly regarded as dealing with marriage problems beyond the author's expectations.[9] Here we see another significant aspect of cousinhood that is related to the divergence of views between Hardy and the novel's reader.

It is the condition of cousinship that allows Jude and Sue to live together in the same house. Being relatives justifies them in sharing a life though they have not yet become man and wife in a lawful sense. Once Sue is free from Phillotson, therefore, the penultimate part in the novel can begin with the narrator's description of Jude and Sue's life. Here, 'Sue and Jude were living in Aldbrickham, in precisely the same relations that they had established between themselves when she left Shaston to join him the year before' (271). The emphasis is thus on the fact that they still remain in the same relationship, the ambiguous distance of cousin-relations, which maintains this Hardy-like space in suspense. They keep their peculiar pendulum-movements between opposing extremes. We need to consider, however, that their present relationship differs in its quality from that embodied in their oneness—as if they had lost the energy to develop the plot further. Unlike their former situations that maintained an oscillating space, 'the little house with Jude's name on it' (271) this time confines them in its restricted space, depriving them of free movements. Their house functions as an outer frame here corresponding to the man-made fetters in society. Jude and Sue are kept in close confinement.

As their life continues, therefore, the distance between Sue and Jude, which basically contains the ambiguity of the relative and the lover, transforms itself into the more problematic one of "man and wife." In the confinement of the house, their relationship comes to be practically indistinguishable from an ordinary man–wife relationship. Though their way of living is fundamentally based on their authentic cousinship, here a serious gap develops that leads to their isolation from society. For people around them suspect their relationship: they have doubts about the justness of being married cousins. The earlier episode at the Training College in Melchester had indicated as much. A year before when Sue went out for an excursion which obliged her to stay overnight with Jude, 'a lamentable seduction of one of the pupils' (160) is said to have occurred with the same mitigation that the student and her lover were cousins. Owing to this, their cousinship

loses its sense of justness, bearing unfavorable meanings instead: convenience, dubiousness, and moral corruption. Jude and Sue's case is not an exception. The following is a dialogue between one of the mistresses and a girl in the College. Not only do the mistresses not accept it as mitigation, they also pervert the truth of the situation:

> 'I may as well tell you that it has been ascertained that the young man Bridehead stayed out with was not her cousin, for the very good reason that she has no such relative. We have written to Christminster to ascertain.'
>
> 'We are willing to take her word,' said the head girl. (162)

Considering what Jude and Sue are to face in the future, this conversation is ominous. As the girl's word ironically echoes, this implies an approaching gap between Jude and Sue, which actualizes their cooperative life under the condition of cousinship, and the people around them, who cannot accept their relationship as it is. In this respect, Little Father Time's sudden appearance is fatal: for '[t]he curious fact of a child coming to them unexpectedly, who called Jude father, and Sue mother' (310) encourages undesirable rumors about them. The spread of these rumor can be confirmed by another, the conversation between Arabella and Dr Vilvert, a physician, at the Great Wessex Agricultural Show. Arabella remarks: 'They *say* they are cousins' (306) and Dr Vilvert answers: 'Cousinship is a great convenience to their feelings, I should say?' (306). Even though their cousinhood is genuine, it is now presented as nothing but a simple "excuse" for them. Hence, they are completely caught and begin to stagnate in their dubious "man and wife" relationship. Within the house, the meaning of their being cousins is lost, and so is the peculiar distance between Jude and Sue, the overlapping space of tragicomedy in the novel.

Being deprived of this Hardy–like space in suspension, their confinement continuously leads Jude and Sue into further deadlocked circumstances. Without intending to advance their relations, they aggravate conflict with the people around them. Their space comes to be all the more figuratively limited, even outside of their house. This is symbolically represented in the repetitive walks that repeat their comings and goings without achieving any progress. For '[t]hey started arm in arm for the office' (296) to receive the marriage certificate, yet, instead of having this done, 'in the street they turned into an unfrequented side alley, where they walked up and down as they had done long ago in the Market-house at Melchester' (297). This is an

indication of their approaching impasse, one in which they are fated to a deadlocked exclusion from society. Soon after this, therefore, Jude and Sue enter on 'a shifting, almost nomadic, life' (320) without having any definite place in which to settle. In this respect, the narrator's description of their relations—their distance—at this time is suggestive: 'they had become such companions that they could hardly do anything of importance except in each other's company' (293). With the disappearance of distance between the two, with the restricted movement of Jude and Sue, there is no movement in the plot between relatives and lovers, tragedy and comedy. Instead, an atmosphere of complete tragedy, a serious conflict between the protagonists and society, begins to pervade the latter part of the novel. The focus of the novel now turns to the modern issue of a man and woman's relationship without marriage. At this point there arrives the harshest element in the novel: Little Father Time, the child of Jude and Arabella, commits suicide after having killed the children from Jude and Sue's relationship.

It has been widely acknowledged that Little Father Time—not a realistic representation, but a 'fanciful allegory' (Buckley 183)—is an embodiment of Hardy's pessimism.[10] Within the monotonous tone of the novel, however, this peculiar figure has a practical justification. His sudden suicide and murder of the other children, which conclusively destroys the controversial relationship between Jude and Sue, functions as a breakthrough in the plot.[11] This great tragedy seems to swallow up everything in a moment; it breaks down the sense of stagnation, and sets up the final closing movement of the plot. It also brings an end to Jude and Sue's cohabitation which has been the cause of the confrontation between the protagonists and society in the novel. The dramatic event, therefore, seems to pass judgement on Jude and Sue. The following is a description of the face of Little Father Time after he has committed suicide:

> The boy's face expressed the whole tale of their situation. On that little shape had converged all the inauspiciousness and shadow which had darkened the first union of Jude, and all the accidents, mistakes, fears, errors of the last. He was their nodal point, their focus, their expression in a single term. For the rashness of those parents he had groaned, for their ill-assortment he had quaked, and for the misfortunes of these he had died. (346)

Hence Jude and Sue are punished by Little Father Time, who records their indecisive way of living and their ambiguous relationship as

"man and wife" based on cousinship. Their confrontation with society ends at this point. Owing to this, what we have after this fatal episode is the tiresome and almost inconceivable process by which Jude and Sue return to their respective married lives: Jude to Arabella, and Sue to Phillotson. With this triggering device, the plot leaves us with an impression that it somehow manages to close the novel in a still monotonous and changeless tone.

Parallel to the process in which Jude and Sue are confined in their dubious relationship, potential varieties of a plot suspended between tragedy and comedy are also distinguishable. In its inclination towards tragedy, the plot comes to lay emphasis on a confrontation between Jude and Sue and the people around them. This involves no more artifice of Hardy's, who shapes a space in suspension, a tragi-comedy. Therefore, what we have after their cohabitation, their radical form of a married life, is a disappearance of 'Hardy-ness' and a bitter discord between the protagonists and society. Everything that has happened has its origin in their kinship. Yet Jude is still right to say: "'We have wronged no man, corrupted no man, defrauded no man!' Though perhaps we have 'done that which was right in our own eyes'" (319). In this respect, it can be understood that the judgment of Little Father Time is passed on to Hardy, the plot–maker, who leads his protagonists and his novel into an impasse. For the introduction of Jude and Sue's cousinship seems also related to Hardy's dilemma, a dilemma which leads him to abandon writing fiction after *Jude* and to turn to poetry.

IV

It is often said that Sue represents an image of the 'New Woman' of the late nineteenth century, and as such is the most lively and intellectual heroine of Hardy characters.[12] Yet we see Sue gradually losing her brightness after each turn in the novel. Sue's deterioration seems to reflect the dilemma that drove Hardy finally to give up writing novels after *Jude*. It has been confirmed that Hardy has been on the weak, especially on women, who suffer from several inequalities. Yet while dealing with Sue, Hardy confronts the question of whether making her free from conventions would directly result in her happiness. The condition of cousinship is again related to this issue. The cousin-relationship between Sue and Jude created the Hardy-like space in suspense and removed it again by confining them to their house, a symbol

of man-made fetters in society. Then, from their separated space, a new distance between Jude and Sue arises so as to produce further free movement. This involves a biological difference—a perpetual distance—between man and woman. It also manifests Hardy's dilemma.

Jude and Sue are an unusual pair, who show a number of remarkable resemblances. Before forming a oneness, they discover several factors that emphasize their similarity. In each case, the condition of being cousins more or less seems to be of influence on their similarity. As cousinship — neither as close as immediate family, nor as distant as those unrelated — still reveals something in common, their several affinities are attributed to it. This is demonstrated when Jude becomes enchanted by Sue's face in a photograph. Her face 'haunted him' (102), and Jude is captured by his strong and unusual link to her. Without knowing why, he kisses the photo and feels at home; or, on hearing Sue speak to others, he acknowledges in her accent 'the certain qualities of his own voice; softened and sweetened, but his own' (111). Cousinhood thus connects them somewhere deep in their relationship. Then, further, Jude comes to see his own figure in Sue. This is when Sue seeks refuge with Jude by swimming across a river to escape from the Training School. Being startled by the coincidence that she asks for refuge with Jude as he had done before, the narrator cries: 'What counterparts they are!' (163). Then, after suggesting Sue wear his Sunday suit, what Jude sees is 'a slim and fragile being masquerading as himself on a Sunday, so pathetic in her defencelessness that his heart felt big with the sense of it' (164). Sue's vulnerable figure captures Jude completely. Yet, at this moment, Jude also stares at his own figure reflected in Sue. In this scene, the 'two Judes'—or the 'two Sues'—confront each other. Jude and Sue thus gradually approach their oneness through physical resemblance.

In the case of Sue, cousinship reveals their inner similarity. A letter that Sue first directs to Jude gives us a clue to this. Knowing that he lives in Christminster, the town she is going to leave, Sue writes a little note to Jude that begins with the opening 'dear cousin Jude':

> She addressed him as her dear cousin Jude; said she had only just learnt by the merest accident that he was living in Christminster, and reproached him with not letting her know. They might have had such nice times together, she said, for she was thrown much upon herself, and had hardly any congenial friend. But now there was ever probability of her soon going away, so that the chance of companionship would be lost perhaps for ever. (122)

This small note condemning Jude for his unkindness is written in haste and directed to him unreservedly. Yet this too unveils a similarity between the two: Sue bears something corresponding to Jude. Disclosed here is a peculiarity in the blood of the Fawleys that is somehow related to the difficulties for them in finding friends among people who are not relations. Without having close friends, Sue expects Jude to be the one whose existence must be 'congenial' with her's. Cousinship supports both their external and internal closeness.

Jude and Sue's oneness can thus be fully appreciated only when these similarities are pointed out. In this respect, Phillotson's utterance of their extreme closeness, '[t]hey seem to be one person split in two!,' comes as a climax to their relationship in the novel. This unusual image reminds us of another peculiar pair, Catherine and Heathcliff, in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847). Catherine cries, 'I *am* Heathcliff.'[13] Yet a significant difference exists between these two couples. Unlike Catherine and Heathcliff, who remain in their ideological world, our pair in *Jude* are compelled to live on in a harsh reality. Jude and Sue have a subsequent life after consummating their relationship: Sue becomes pregnant.

Pregnancies are the physical revelation of a woman's sexuality.[17] It is therefore ironical that Sue, who has the least femininess among Hardy heroines, bears the largest number of children. As Penny Boumelha argues, "[i]t is Sue, not Jude, who is the primary site of that 'deadly war waged between flesh and spirit' of which Hardy speaks in his Preface" (Boumelha 144-45), because sexuality brings no physical change to Jude. Though she has formed her oneness with Jude, even to the extent that they are physically alike, she cannot be equal of Jude because of pregnancy. Their physical similarity thus undesirably comes to reveal the biological difference between the two. The closer they are, paradoxically the more conspicuous the difference between them becomes. Thus Hardy finds himself confronting the question of a true equality between man and woman; for Jude and Sue cannot be the same no matter how Hardy wants them to be so.

As the episode of the '*new* New Testament' (171) which Sue broke into pieces and reconstructed again symbolically indicates, Sue is the prototype of the new woman who desires to be entirely free from any fixed conceptual thinking.[14] She is a representative of Hardy's attempts to emancipate women from the fetters of social conventions. This also accounts for her refusal to proceed with her marriage contract with Jude, so as to be united with Jude by law. As Aunt Drusilla

explains, '[t]here's sommat in our blood that won't take kindly to the notion of being bound to do what do readily enough if not bound'(94). Thus, the root of her free will is defined as a hereditary characteristic. It is as if Hardy intended to evade his responsibility for creating Sue, a controversial figure, by attributing her individual character to a genetic peculiarity. Yet, as we have considered, it is the condition of cousinship itself—not their hereditary characteristics—that torments Jude and Sue. Moreover, Sue's refusal to proceed with the marriage contract has its more specific explanation. In his letter of 20 November 1895 to Edmund Gosse, Hardy explains Sue's fear for the marriage contract as follows:

> one of her reasons for fearing the marriage ceremony is that she fears it would be breaking faith with Jude to withhold herself at pleasure, or altogether, after it; though while uncontracted she feels at liberty to yield herself as seldom as she chooses. This has tended to keep his passion as hot at the end as at the beginning, and helps to break his heart.[15]

Beyond the peculiarity of the Fawley blood, Sue's rejection of being bound to Jude originates also in the idea of having Sue keep Jude and his passionate love perpetually unsatisfied. Hence Hardy's handling of Sue seems to go beyond the simple category of family tragedy. The controversial distance of "man and wife" is the cause of their exile; nevertheless, it is one of Hardy's most ambitious attempts to represent a complex distance between man and woman.[16]

Despite this highly motivated testing, Sue comes to lose her brightness while practising Hardy's idealism. Sue is originally freer than any of Hardy's other heroines, yet the pregnancy damages her remarkable character. Sue can not be free from being a woman. In this respect, Phillotson's utterance, when he allows Sue to go to Jude, sounds ironical: 'What I was going to say is that my liberating her can do her no possible harm, and will open up a chance of happiness for her which she has never dreamt of hitherto'(268). Though Sue has freedom even in her sexuality and her controversial distance from Jude is one ideal representation of Hardy's ambitious attempts, she is still obliged to have her miserable breakdown after the tragedy of Little Father Time.

Sue's breakdown has been interpreted in a variety of ways. Boumelha attributes it to 'social forces that press harder on women in sexual and marital relationships'(153), whereas Merryn Williams sees

it as 'a very long tradition in English literature of making women break down' (57). These different interpretations result from their different views of Hardy's attitude to the writing of *Jude*. While the former recognizes it as radical, the latter understands it as conservative. It cannot be denied that Sue is burdened heavily by social pressures. Yet if this were the only way of explaining her miserable end, then, it is to be presumed that Hardy might have continued writing fiction even after *Jude*, producing other works that blamed society in the hope of renewing it. Yet Hardy could not do this. From the author's point of view, *Jude* may not appear to be a positive challenge to society, rather it seems a disclosure of the dilemma that he faces in the process of composition. The understanding of its first readers and of the author's may differ greatly. It is important, therefore, to consider the tragedy of Little Father Time once again.

As we have already noticed, this unrealistic little figure has his role in bringing about a breakthrough in the monotonous tone of a plot that has already lost its appeal. By punishing the relationship of Jude and Sue, it resolves the harsh confrontation between the two and society. However, this also discloses the novelist Hardy, trapped in a dead end. What Little Father Time swallowed up by his death is not only the present of Jude and Sue, but also their future. After the tragedy, Jude and Sue have no heirs. This has been argued to be a representation of degeneration, the widely accepted idea used to explain the cause of anxieties about poverty and crime in the late Victorian England; for marriage between cousins can be regarded as incest.[18] Yet it is Little Father Time, the child of Jude and Arabella's marriage, who was born deformed.[19] In *Jude*, neither of Jude and Sue's children is even called by their names and Sue seems to bear her two children 'only to find them hanged' (Pinion 148). Gillian Beer has observed that:

> The death of their children (murdered by little Father Time in a late Malthusian tragedy, 'Done because we are too menny') leaves Jude and Sue as aberrant, without succession, and therefore 'monstrous' in the sense that they can carry no cultural or physical mutations into the future and must live out their lives merely at odds with the present. (Beer 257)

The tragedy of Little Father Time thus makes Jude and Sue abnormal in regard to the biological concept of Darwinism. Yet it is rather *Jude* itself that is 'monstrous,' for it represents the impasse in which Hardy is confined.

Succession and inheritance is not simply denied to Jude and Sue,

but also to the development of the novel. Considering that Hardy often ends his novels with the deaths of his heroes and heroines, representing his homage to an individual life-span against the cosmic scale which Darwinism brought in, Jude's death at the end is not so striking.[20] His dead body lying on the bed 'straight as an arrow' (411) can suggest that he dies in vain. Yet it is rather significant that his death interrupts the succession of the Fawleys, as if representing Hardy's deadlocked circumstances. Unlike his other works in which we usually feel some suggestions of hope through, for example, other characters' marriage or anticipations of new childbirth, with Jude's death, the inheritance descended from the Fawleys is banished from *Jude*. After all, *Jude* ends by negating the succession of the human race, which opposes the fundamental principle of Darwinism. In spite of Hardy's attempts to make Sue equal with Jude, there is nothing left which can forward his trials to the future.

If succession and inheritance are the core of Darwinism, it is also succession and inheritance which 'organise society and sustain hegemony'(Beer 210). As we have seen, however, they are suddenly cut off by the disastrous intervention of Little Father Time in *Jude*. Hence Hardy's dilemma. Williams concludes her essay as follows:

> Hardy sympathised with any moves which were likely to improve the status of women, but ultimately he could not believe that legal or social changes would help them, seeing that 'the unalterable laws of nature are based upon a wrong.' (William 59)

The barren world of *Jude* symbolically indicates Hardy's impasse, his recognition that men and women can not be equal. This is what Hardy faces at the end of his lifelong struggle creatively to emancipate the weak, especially women, from unfair treatment. The cousinship of Jude and Sue discloses this in their varying distance.

V

In *Jude the Obscure*, the cousin-relationship between the protagonists Jude and Sue is the device which produces the Hardy-like space in suspense, the indefinite space between two extremes. The ambiguous distance created by cousinship throws Jude and Sue into different sorts of intimacy and separation, and it urges them to sway right and left continuously as if they were the swing of a pendulum. Once they start sharing a life together, however, the surrounding situation changes the focus of the novel. It was the cousin-relationship between

Jude and Sue that enabled them to live together. Yet the same condition transforms the meaning of their relationship into the more dubious and controversial one of "man-wife" relations, causing Jude and Sue to come into conflict with the people around them. It also deprived them of that Hardy-like space of tragicomedy in the plot. This produces the stark confrontation between the protagonists and society concerning their radical style of living. Jude and Sue's cohabitation reveals the inevitable distance between them through Sue's pregnancy. Due to their earlier sense of oneness, this biological difference becomes paradoxically conspicuous. Despite the ambitions that Hardy allows Sue in particular, at the end she turns into a weak, featureless woman. Hardy is compelled to recognize a limit in emancipating women from sexual discrimination: for men and women cannot be equal.

Here is the narrator's description of Jude and Sue meeting each other for the first time:

> The broad street was silent, and almost deserted, although it was not late. He saw a figure on the other side, which turned out to be hers, and they both converged towards the cross-mark at the same moment. Before either had reached it she called out to him:
>
> 'I am not going to meet you just there, for the first time in my life! Come further on.' (122)

Knowing that they were approaching 'the spot of the Martyrdoms' (122), a cursed place, Sue urged Jude to walk further on his side. As a result, '[t]hey walked on in parallel lines' (123). In the context of what we have considered in this essay, their first meeting assumes a significance. The tragedy of Jude and Sue seems condensed into this tiny scene. The place she rejected is the intersection: it is the intersection of orthodoxy and heterodoxy, and more significantly, of life and death. In Hardy's fiction, crossroads or street corners can be often recognized, for they are all boundaries which symbolize the Hardy-like space, the overlapping space in suspense between opposing extremes. Sue's avoidance of the place of cross-mark, therefore, can imply the coming loss of this space. In their accidental walk in parallel, Hardy's stagnation is also symbolized. As things in parallel will never meet no matter how far they go, Jude and Sue's walk seems to represent the perpetual distance between man and woman.

Owing to the introduction of the cousin-relationship between Jude and Sue, Hardy has come to an impasse, a recognition of inequality between man and woman. In this respect, the way that the narrator

describes Sue observing Jude is suggestive: '[i]t was evident that her cousin deeply interested her, as one might be interested in a man puzzling out his way along a labyrinth from which one had one's self escaped' (157). Cousinship is the labyrinth in which Hardy himself has come to a deadlock together with his protagonists Jude and Sue.

Notes

[1] See Florence Emily Hardy 153, 259; see also, Roger Ebbatson 19.

[2] Some critics consider that Hardy's revisions to *The Well-Beloved* (1897) should be regarded as his last novel. Yet there is also an argument that the revised text does not represent a radical departure from the original written before *Jude*. See H. M. Daleski 186.

[3] See Daleski 204-205. Daleski's argument is close to mine, yet there is no discussion of the cousin-relationship between Jude and Sue.

[4] Letter to Edmund Gosse, Nov. 10, 1985, in *Collected Letters*, 93.

[5] Thomas Hardy, ed. P. N. Furbank, *Jude the Obscure.* The New Wessex Edition (London: Macmillan, 1974), 245. All the quotations taken from the novel in my essay refer to this edition.

[6] By examining Hardy's shifts from narrational sentences to Represented Speech sentences, Christine Brooke-Rose points out that one of Hardy's indeterminacies results from this 'dissolution of the boundaries between author and character' (29-46). On the other hand, Penny Boumelha regards it as 'a kind of collusion,' for they share 'a man's picture of a woman' (147).

[7] Ronald P. Draper also discusses *Jude* as a comic tragedy. He points out that a 'continuing impatience' is what distinguishes the novel from traditional tragedy. Yet again there is no argument about Jude and Sue's cousinship. See Draper 243-254.

[8] As to the reversal of roles, see Anne Z. Mickelson 133, or Ellen Lew Sprechman 107-108.

[9] In his letter to Edmund Gosse, November 20, 1895, Hardy writes that the novel was regarded as dealing mainly with 'the marriage question' against his will. See *Collected Letters* 99.

[10] See, for example, Robin Gilmour 180.

[11] H. M. Daleski also regards this as 'a catastrophe in the narrative' (204).

[12] See, for example, Lloyd Fernando, "*New Women" in the Late Victorian Novel* (London: Pennsylvania State UP, 1977); Gail Cunningham, *The New Woman and the Victorian Novel* (London: Macmillan, 1978). Fernando considers Sue's self–realization of her sex as Hardy's originality and Cunningham subsequently examines Sue's unconventionality.

[13] Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*, 82.

[14] Kathleen Blake, by mentioning Sue's liking for books, claims that she represents an emancipated woman in the later nineteenth century.

[15] Letter to Edmund Gosse, Nov. 20, 1895, in *Collected Letters*, 99.

[16] The same idea can be also traced to his earlier work *Far From the Madding Crowd* (1874). In this novel, one of the characters describes the way to sustain the love of a husband towards his wife after marriage. Going back to their earlier stage of being lovers and reevaluating their distance was the device recommended to revitalize already too familiar hearts.

[17] When the public had hardly any knowledge of contraception in the Victorian Age, sexual intercourse all the more usually meant pregnancy. See Boumelha, *Thomas Hardy* 22.

[18] See William Greenslade 159-160.

[19] In *The Heavenly Twins* (1893) by Sarah Grand, a monster child appears as a result of venereal disease. Merryn Williams considers further similarities between these novels. See Williams 52. In the context of feminist fiction, Elaine Showalter regards Little Father Time as 'the prematurely aged and psychologically disturbed syphilitic child' (108).

[20] See Roger Robinson 28-43; Beer 239.

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